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8 October 1984**HARRY HOWE RANSOM****An opposing view****Peacetime spying
not a serious threat**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — To argue that the FBI's California embarrassment means that our counterintelligence needs more funds and "unleashed" agents makes no sense.

Nor is it logical to suggest that FBI agent Miller's alleged crime resulted from cutbacks and restrictions imposed after disclosures in the 1970s of the Bureau's misdeeds.

Reports of Miller's alleged handing over of secret documents to Soviet KGB agents read more like a script for a Woody Allen comedy than a case of serious espionage.

Here we have a real-life veteran FBI agent disciplined by the Bureau for being overweight and unproductive. He also had a large family to feed, and the avocado farm was failing. Enter Svetlana Ogorodnikova, claiming to be a sympathetic KGB major. Counterspy Miller seized his chance to prospect for Soviet gold and was entrapped.

This tragicomedy scenario resembles so many modern spy cases in that most represent personal tragedy. Few cases cause security disasters for the nation.

My intuitive feeling is that few vital security secrets have been lost in this case — and that the threat of Soviet spies is being vastly overplayed.

Those who panic in reaction to the Miller case and illogically propose increasing the size and scope of domestic counterintelligence fail to distinguish between wartime and peacetime espionage.

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Spying is a deadly game in wartime. Stealing secret documents can spell victory or defeat. But in peacetime, espionage is a troublesome, less serious activity, often tolerated by the governments involved.

While spying can do damage, much peacetime espionage is a huge international boondoggle. Many professional spies are secret leaf-rakers, making unproductive work for themselves and their foreign counterparts. FBI and KGB bureaucrats need each other.

I do not make light of the KGB's extensive efforts to steal scientific and military secrets. Sadly, a power struggle characterizes world politics, and information is power. The most serious counterintelligence problem involves terrorism and narcotics control.

But counterspying is a police function that must be sensitively managed in a democratic society. To catch spies we need quality, not quantity. If we double the FBI counterintelligence force, we might get two disloyal FBI agents rather than one in half a century, but probably little additional security.

State secrets in the Soviet Union are doubtless more secure than those in the USA. Foreign spies have a difficult time in Russia. Sometimes they run free in America. The price the Soviets pay for their "security" is a police state. Who wants to trade systems?